



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Elko District Office
3900 East Idaho Street
Elko, Nevada 89801

http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/elko_field_office.html

In Reply Refer To:
4100/4700 (NVE01000)

Dear Interested Public:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Elko District Office is seeking public input on a proposed Environmental Assessment (EA) for management of livestock and wild horses within the Elko District during drought conditions.

According to the US Drought Monitor, Nevada is currently experiencing moderate to extreme drought conditions. Because forage plants are dependent upon precipitation for growth, drought conditions reduce the amount of forage availability for livestock, wild horses, and wildlife. Drought can also reduce the amount of water that is available in streams, seeps, and springs. The proposed EA will be prepared to allow the BLM to respond to current and future drought conditions, thereby ensuring the long-term health and sustainability of public lands within the Elko District.

The proposed EA will examine several factors that will be used to make on-the-ground evaluations of allotments that may need temporary management changes due to drought conditions. Some of these factors will be winter/spring precipitation accumulation; water availability for livestock, wild horses, and wildlife; residual forage from previous growing seasons; current year's forage plant growth; plant vigor; soil moisture content; soil/site stability and hydrologic function; riparian health and function; plant community composition; and wildlife habitat condition. Other factors may also be incorporated as needed.

The proposed EA will be prepared to analyze a wide range of temporary drought response alternatives that could potentially be used to mitigate the effects of drought. These temporary responses include partial or complete closure of allotments; partial temporary suspension in animal unit months; temporary changes to season of use; reduced temporary grazing duration; changes in livestock management practices; temporary fencing of critical areas; targeted grazing of monotypic invasive annual plant communities; temporary change in kind or class of livestock; temporary water hauls; temporary above ground pipelines; and wild horse removals. Any temporary drought response alternatives implemented would be assessed on a yearly basis. If resource conditions improve and no further drought response alternatives are warranted, grazing permits would revert back to normal.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Counsel on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA, the proposed EA will identify, describe, and evaluate resource protection measures that would mitigate the possible impacts of drought management actions.

The BLM is seeking public input by initiating a 30-day public comment period. Comments may be submitted via email to BLM_NV_ELDO_DroughtEA@blm.gov, or to the mailing address listed above until 4:30 p.m., November 15, 2012.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the proposed drought management EA please contact Casey Addy, Rangeland Management Specialist, at (775) 753-0202, or Terri Dobis, Project Manager, at (775) 753-0290.

Sincerely,

Kenneth E. Miller
District Manager